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THE DUTY OF THE PEOPLE IN CHILD PROTECTION

BY HON. HOKE SMITH,
Governor of Georgia.

Our chairman has referred to Socrates and Cræsus, and in a manner to cause us to admire the one and to be careless of the other. I have no doubt that even during their lives Socrates enjoyed privileges and experienced forms of pleasure that were shut out to the cold and selfish career simply of money. If we are to serve our God, our country and our fellowman, if that is our highest duty, how can we find anywhere the union of all three of these services so completely blended as when we seek to train our children and the children of our country mentally, physically, morally and spiritually?

When Solomon told us that we must train up a child as he should go and afterward he would not depart from the way, it was a solemn admonition; it was broad language which he used. It contemplated that when we care for the child, we must look after the physical child as well as the mental child; we must look after the moral child as well as the spiritual child. We have our school houses, especially devoted to training them in books; we have our Sunday schools, especially devoted to training them in the Bible. If we take off either of these lines of instruction, their work will be defective. You cannot lead a man to the true conception of spiritual truths, or to any faith in you as a spiritual leader, if you are content to see the man's mother in want and his wife and children hungry and naked. The work of the pulpit cannot accomplish its highest end, it cannot produce its richest fruit, if it is to be limited to that to which I have just referred, modern evangelization. It must be broadened into a conception of life of the present as well as of the future, of the things that surround man here on earth; and the pulpit must teach, as to the child, not simply the spiritual state, it must also consider the responsibility of adults for the mental, physical and moral side of the child as well as the spiritual.

Symmetrical Training

There can be no complete development of child or of man on simply departmental lines. His training must cover, if it is to be

genuine and complete, the full characteristics and qualities that go to make a useful man or woman. When we contemplate the work in the protection of children, we must realize that for that work to reach its proper place, public sentiment must be applied and people must understand what is necessary for the mental development; what is necessary for the physical protection; what is necessary for the moral growth, as well as what should be taught for the spiritual future of the child.

We have in our country a great organization of men called "The Laymen's Foreign Mission Brotherhood." Against it I utter no criticism. About it I have nothing to say but praise. But I cannot help feeling that the boys and girls of *our own country* need something, too. I cannot feel that it is necessary to cross the great Pacific and mingle with the yellow and brown skins and the black skins in Africa, to have something so far off that it has to arouse the imagination, before we can bring to our heart real joy and serve our Maker as faithful children, while right here at our homes, by our firesides almost, there are flaxen-haired boys and girls growing up starved mentally, starved physically, starved morally and spiritually.

If we expect to do for these children all to which they are entitled, if we expect to render them full service, then we must teach the people, we must let them understand. I do not believe the men and women of this city or state or nation are careless about the welfare of their fellows. I do not believe they really are more interested in a little Korean or a little Chinaman than they are in the Caucasian right in our own town. It is because the one has been taught them and talked to them in season and out of season, and the other has been neglected; not often referred to in the pulpit, not often referred to by laymen's organizations. They are simply forgetful and unconscious of the opportunities right at the very gates of Jerusalem. The time has passed when any man can raise the objection, when legislation, state or national, is proposed to help the child, that paternalism is threatened. It is not paternalism that he is so much afraid of, it is too much patriotism. The states will readily respond, if the people only understand.

You have made great progress. The work of protecting the children from the workshop and factory has grown all over our land. It took England over a hundred years to arouse the people

of that country to the fear that they were, from an economic standpoint, destroying the power of their country by consuming the useful hours of the children's life at brutal and destructive labor. Our people are realizing it rapidly. The difficulty that really confronts us is that a small organization with a purpose is dangerous as an antagonist against the great body of people who lack organization. For this very reason it is necessary to get the people to really think. Children must be trained for the great civic responsibility that rests upon them, that they may learn to watch and know what takes place in legislative halls, and then they will be ready if a law comes before a deliberative body, to know who represent them, for the protection of their own mental and physical well being. They will be watchful and call to speedy account the legislator who is faithless to the great trust which we all carry and owe to the children of our land.

Investigation

And beyond our duty to create a wholesome sentiment, to produce an organization back of the protection of children in legislative halls, there is another great duty that rests upon us that the state cannot reach. It is the responsibility of individual inquiry; of individual investigation. Suppose it were possible to arouse the women of any city in our country to a consciousness that there are little boys and girls in homes without food, where they are growing up starved mentally while they are starving physically. Do you suppose they would wear themselves out trying to find something to amuse themselves? Oh, they would not. It is because they do not know; it is because they do not understand; it is because they have not been turned to this great work. In this city of ours, if we had the women here and they could be told the story, if we produced the machinery to furnish them the instances where the opportunity was given to go to a family in want, to a widow with her two or three little boys out on the streets at eight and ten years of age, subjected to all kinds of temptations as they help to make a living selling a paper for two pennies, and the girl in want and in danger of worse, they would go to that family with hearts full of love, to carry a charity that would help put these children in a position to prepare themselves to be independent when manhood and womanhood come.

We have no great organization of laymen in the United States with able representatives traveling throughout the country, talking in the churches and pointing the way. This is one of the people's duties, to prepare to protect all of our boys and girls against want, by fitting them mentally, morally, physically and spiritually for the responsibilities of life. I would have the pulpits used to teach these truths to the children; to teach, as I said before, something more than mere modern evangelization; to teach the doctrine of practical service, the responsibility of man for man; for we are our brothers' keepers and we cannot escape the responsibility that attaches to that fact, and we will not let our zeal flag. You will move on in your glorious work; you will gain recruits as you move; you will never weary of the task, for as well might the angel standing at heaven's gate weary of his task, when each time he swings the gate ajar, another soul is ushered into Paradise.